A MUSTARD-SEED IN JAPAN

BY

WM. MERRELL VORIES.

1911

HACHIMAN, OMI, JAPAN.

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THE MUSTARD-SEED.

ONE planted a Seed—'twas a little thing
To sow in the Field of his Lord and King;—
A grain of mustard. It grew and spread
Till it sheltered the weary toiler's head.
And under its branches sweet songsters rare
Sang hymns of praise, as they nested there.
And he who had planted the tiny seed
Forgot his shame at the humble deed.

And one gave his Life—'twas a little thing,
But 'twas all he had to give to his King.
The Master sent him where Darkness dwelt,
Where the Blind and Lame to strange idols knelt.
'Twas a lonely land; but he looked Above
As he brot to the hopeless the message of Love.
And many whose gropings had been in vain
To the life of the Spirit were born again.
And his life poured out for a world in need
Was multiplied like the Mustard-Seed!

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EMBODYING

THE JAPANESE EXPERIENCES

OF AN AMERICAN TEACHER

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WM. MERRELL VORIES.

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HACHIMAN, OMI, JAPAN.

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These *Japanese Experiences of an American Teacher* are the story of a unique interior mission in Japan, substantially as told by Mr. Vories during his recent American tour in quest of building-funds. Many of the hearers urged the publication of the story, and this little book is the result.

A MUSTARD-SEED IN JAPAN

EMBODYING
THE JAPANESE EXPERIENCES OF AN AMERICAN TEACHER.

ABOUT seven years ago, a Japanese student, in a provincial academy in the interior of Japan, became so much impressed by the character of an American teacher, that he decided to himself adopt the Christianity which he perceived to be the source of his instructor's ideals. Soon after, that teacher was called to another school, and the young man found himself without a guide in his new aspirations; for neither among the native faculty nor in the student body was there any other of his faith. Nevertheless he persisted in it, and in the solitude of his own room at the school dormitory, he was praying daily

that God would send another Christian teacher to his school; that he might learn more fully, and that his fellow-students might also have the Light that seemed to him to give so much promise. But his prayers seemed to remain unanswered, and after a time he was graduated from the school. However, because he had proved exceptionally good in the English language, he was retained in the school as an instructor in the preparatory department, and still he continued to pray that the right man might be led to that place.

* * * * * *

On the opposite side of the earth, events were shaping toward a fulfilment. I had been graduated from college only half a year when a letter reached me from one of the International Secretaries of the Y.M.C.A. asking me if I would accept a position as a teacher of English in Japan.

The writer knew that I was a Student

B. C. Miyamoto, whose prayers were the seed from which the work grew.

Volunteer for Foreign Missions, and that I had expressed certain notions as to the type of work I should prefer. Among these, I wished to be sent to some neglected portion of the field to begin a pioneer mission, and I wished, if possible, in some way to earn my own living, rather than to be paid a salary for my services. The tent-making of St. Paul in his missionary work had impressed me.

So the letter informed me that an opening, which might prove exactly such as I had suggested, had come. Here was a Japanese government academy in an interior town, at the heart of a whole province where no missionary had yet resided; and the provincial authorities wanted a teacher of English so much that they would concede him permission to teach Bible classes in his leisure time, so long as he refrained from mentioning religion in the class rooms. Thus I might earn my living by teaching, and at the same time inaugurate mission

work in virgin soil. The opportunity struck me as being so peculiarly what I had been praying for, that within a few hours of receiving the letter I had accepted.

Such were the preliminary conditions that led to my setting sail, in January of 1905, for the Land of the Rising Sun. But it was some months before I came to realize that the prayers of that young Japanese instructor and of myself had been answered simultaneously.

On arriving in Tokyo, I went to the national head-quarters of the Y.M.C.A. to receive further directions. There I heard regarding my future field of labor what speedily convinced me that I had certainly been led to a most needy and neglected portion of the unevangelized world, and what somewhat dampened the unreasoned enthusiasm of a green twenty-four-year-old. In brief, I was told this: "The province of Omi, to which you are going, is an inland division of the country, cut off from the

surrounding parts by a girdle of mountains, isolated from foreign contact, conservative to a degree, never occupied by a foreign missionary, and not only virgin soil, but in the belt of the last stronghold of the once all-powerful Buddhism. The common people you will find priest-ridden almost beyond approach; the students and teachers of your school, on the other hand, being educated out of the superstitious forms of Buddhism,—which are all they have known, —will be either indifferently agnostic or openly opposed to all religion. You will find nothing prepared for you; but everything against you. You will have three-quarters of a million people all to yourself. Do not be discouraged if, inside of two years, you can see no results, in the missionary part of your work."

If I was somewhat disheartened at this, imagine how much more so when, after a long lonely journey on the slow, narrow-gauge train, I found myself set down upon

a forsaken-looking station-platform, in the midst of a wide plain, and realized that there was not another man of my race within a radius of thirty miles, nor one with whom I could even converse intelligently—since I had not yet learned a word of Japanese.

Even the elements had conspired to emphasise my loneliness. A piercing north-east wind swept the plain, it was already darkening, tho only about four o'clock on a February afternoon. I looked about and realized the tremendous odds,—felt that I literally faced 800,000 hostile beings, without even a medium of communicating with them,—and experienced a feeling of such unspeakable solitariness, inadequacy, home-sickness,—call the complex sensation what you will,—that the one clear conviction issuing from my dazed consciousness shaped itself into an almost incontrollable impulse to run,—and to run in the general direction of home:—It was a panicky, nightmare feeling of defeat.

Hachiman Station.

Fortunately, I had spent my last dollar, and had even borrowed money, to bring me thither; and there was no means of escape.

Looking back after these nearly six years, it is easy to see what the trouble was, that melancholy first week. My great quandary was: What *I* could do against such conditions; how *I* was going to win out in Omi. I hadn't yet learned the true question, which was,—What was GOD going to do for Omi?

One of the chief developments of this story will be the growing realization that He knew, and had it planned out long before I came upon the stage of action. And he will read this narrative to little purpose who does not find in it the lesson that God can take the most unpromising of tools and temper it with fire and water and heavy blows, till it may be used in planting the seeds of His Kingdom where He wills.

Since, then, I had to stay, where should the attack be begun, if not among the young

men whom I was teaching? And first I must win their friendship and confidence, before they could be expected to listen to my advice. To that end, I invited the students to make the little old Japanese house I was occupying their *rendezvous* in their leisure hours, and promised to try and entertain them when they should come.

This invitation did not go begging. In the first place, it was no small attraction that a real live American could be inspected at close-range, and in his native surroundings,—so to speak—for he had with him American furnishings and trinkets, and a large and varied collection of views and picture post cards that gave intimate glimpses of that Promised Land of Japanese youth,—America. Who wouldn't come, and tell his friends, too? And finally, when the curiosity waned, there were those delectable foreign games—new and glamorous there (altho almost prehistoric at home)—such as *Dominoes*, *Flinch*, *Ping Pong*, and the like.

There were few quiet evenings in those days, and few students who escaped the *Flinch fever* and other epidemics of American origin.

It was not driving me distracted, either. On the contrary, I never had appreciated noise, and people, and *talk* (even broken, half-intelligible talk), and all that goes to make up social intercourse, so much as in those weeks following the first tense silence, the solitude, the utter forlornness, of my lonely arrival. My welcome to my visitors was not pretended; and the boys seemed to feel that it was genuine, and responded accordingly.

But entertainment alone, of the students or of myself, was not the purpose of these social evenings. I was studying my field. I was on the lookout for an opening for the work that formed my main purpose.

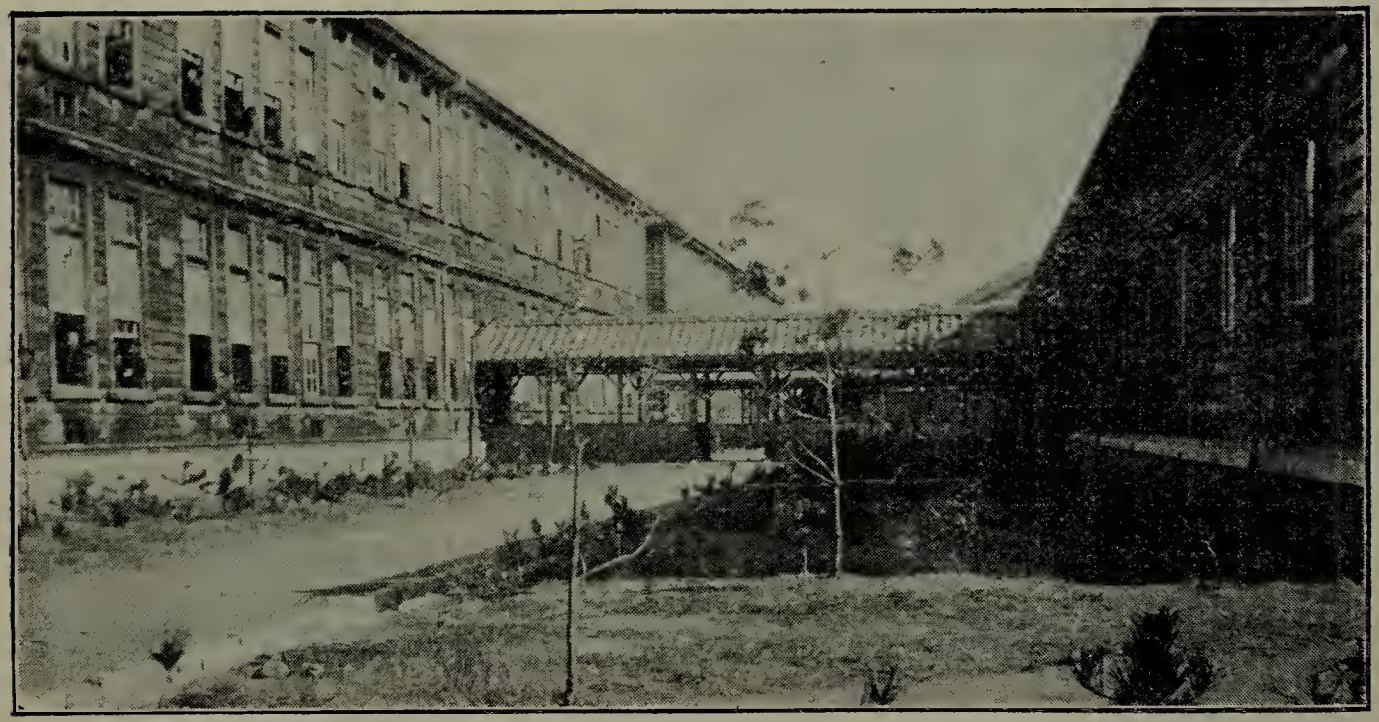
As soon as I had picked the *leaders*, from among the groups that frequented my house, I addressed myself to them in particular; believing that the rank and file

would naturally follow them. And to each such student I put a strange and cryptogramatic question: "Will you join a *Bible class* if I organize one for students?"

Blank looks, at first, were my response,—for most of them knew little or nothing of what the question might imply. Then some thought, "If it is another kind of American *game*, I'll certainly be there"!!

I tried to make clearer what I meant, and ended by explaining that it was something that had proved interesting to me, as a student, and that I believed they, too, would find it so. At any rate, would they come once, and try it? And so, because they had not been ill-treated at my house before, or because they wished to ingratiate themselves with the American teacher, or because they felt curious to see what it would be like,—several agreed to come.

An evening was set for the first session to meet in my study. And then I was face to face with the first crisis. Suppose I could



The Provincial Government School, where Mr. Vories taught for over two years. Recitation Building on left; Dormitory on right.

not make it interesting? And *how* could I make a new conception of life itself even *intelligible*, when I could not explain it in their language? Again I felt the inadequacy of my preparation for the task before me, and again came the sense of defeat which had assailed me that first hour on the station platform.

But this time I was to receive my first lesson in looking toward the right Source for a way-out. Now it was that I came to learn how God had prepared that young Japanese Christian for the hour of need. It was because of his ability in *English* that he had been retained in the school. He was not only able, but eagerly willing to fill the gap. Was it not for such an occasion that he had been so long praying in solitude? Here he came forward to be my speech for me; to take my English paragraphs, as I explained the lesson verse by verse, and interpret them skilfully, *and in the true spirit of the original* (which is the crux in all translation).

And the students came. When the chairs and cushions were all filled and still they came, we carried out the furniture, took out sliding partitions, and all sat on the floor of the enlarged room. There were forty-five at that first session. It seemed better to divide the class, according to ages, into two parts, which would be more easily housed; and this was done. But before many weeks had passed each of the divisions was larger than the original class; there being one hundred and twelve enrolled in the two classes. And then there came from two other academies, some miles distant, in our province, where I taught English once per week, voluntary requests from the students themselves, that they also might have Bible classes. And when these had brought the number of such classes up to four, the total enrolment was three hundred and twenty-two.

This was not so bad a showing for that unpromising, uncultivated, neglected field,

The first student Bible class group. Only two-thirds of the enr ollemnt present.

where we had been warned to expect no results under two years!

Very soon these young men began to perceive that here was no new kind of American game, but something vital; something that appealed to a deep chord in their beings, and promised better things than they had yet dared dream of. It was indeed pathetic to see the soul-hunger of many who had had nothing before to arrouse their dormant spiritual natures. They were not deliberately depraved fellows. They had simply never before had an appeal made to the best in them. Now there began to be put to me that question of the hearers of John the Baptist,—"What, then, must we do to be saved?" And, it was an unspeakable joy to be able to point the inquirers, as he did, to the Lamb of God.

I had read in the books of learned globe-trotters that the Japanese were a stoical race, never displaying their feelings in public. Imagine my surprise, then, at witnessing a

whole roomful of young men, at the very age when one is least willing to show emotion, so deeply moved by these simple incidents and parables from the life of the Christ, that tears and even audible sobs were not infrequent. I shall never forget the first time one of the boys sought a personal interview with me. Timidly he overtook me, as I was returning from school, and said, in an embarrassed tone, without the proverbial preliminary evasions, "Please sir, *Sensei*, will you teach me how to pray." I took him home, found for him, in the Japanese Bible, where Jesus taught His disciples to pray the world-wide prayer, and tried to make clear the meaning of it all. So I began to perceive that we were not to have to wait two years for results.

It also early became clear that something more was needed in our teaching of the Christian life than mere *talking* about it to weekly groups of students. I was from the first making a study of local conditions,

because I found the most telling points in our lessons were the ones that were illustrated by application to the lives and habits of the students themselves.

For example, quite a furor was created at one session when I casually referred to the exact location of a secret *rendezvous* of one group of students who supposed their place of debauchery was entirely unknown. Exact knowledge about the personal habits of those present made the sessions in which purity was discussed such telling occasions that not a few dated their awakening from those occasions.

I came to realize that abstract talk about a Christian life was largely uncomprehended thru lack of concrete examples. I could not point to a single member of the *faculty* as an illustration fit for emulation. I could not find a *priest* in the town—altho there were some sixteen temples and shrines of Buddhism and Shintoism in our midst—who was a fit example for young men. And so

far as I could learn not even among the *fathers*, in the more or less distant homes from which the boys came, was there the type of moral righteousness that a young man could be advised to follow!

Yet from "ethics" lectures in school, and from "moral precepts" in temples, some abstract *theories* of morality must have been given. How, then, could we show these young men that Christianity also is not a mere theoretical code, having no issue in the lives of its adherents?

My able assistant, the young Japanese instructor, who had meantime come to live with me, suggested,—or else we evolved the idea together,—that if we could get a student to come and *live with us*, we could help him to apply the principles of Christianity, hour by hour, to the practical problems of student life; and thus develop from their own number an example that would solve our dilemma. We invited one of the older boys to share our humble

The first old house, where for two years the work was quartered. The cross marks the 4½ × 1½ foot door by which we stooped to enter.

home, and he gladly came. Then others asked to come, and were admitted, as far as there was room; till only a disused, and rat-infested attic remained. And when two more boys came to ask admittance to our "*Family*," we had to tell them that the attic was their only hope.

We made a tour of inspection and found such a delapidated, doorless, windowless, dusty and dingy space as *you* would have thought unfit for a hen coop. Yet our young friends settled the matter with the dictum: "We believe we can fix this up all right; and anyway it doesn't matter about the *room*, we only want to live with you!" Some laborers to clean, a carpenter for stairs and windows, and the spring vacation of the boys themselves, devoted to paper-hanging and the like, produced the needed room. Thus, finally, these two also joined us. To one of them I must refer again at some length, and, unless I am greatly mistaken, there will yet be

many, in many lands, who will hear of him.

Our family now numbered eight young men, besides ourselves and our housekeepers. And so well had the experiment worked that these were the first fruits of the work, both in time and in zeal for the spread of the Gospel.

The little house was overtaxed. We were "*close* friends" in too many senses; and besides we felt that if we had more with us, results might be greater. So we set out to rent a larger house. But search as we might, no suitable place was to be found. And this was *providential*, tho at first—like so many of the providences that have shaped this work better than our plans—it seemed a calamity.

Nothing was left, if we hoped for advance, except the very thing we should have thought of long before: namely, to *build* a suitable house. So was evolved the idea of a Y.M.C.A. Building, that should embody not only quarters for a larger "*family*" of

The old house. A corner of the room in which the Bible classes were organized. The furniture was carried out, and the blackboard was used in teaching.

students, but also facilities for social and intellectual and spiritual service to the whole student body, should they care to use them. Since our own savings were very meager, we had to apply for outside aid in this project; and for this we formally organized as a Y.M.C.A. and then appealed to American friends, in a circular letter that was addressed to only about thirty individuals, for assistance. A quick response encouraged us to go ahead, and presently we had the plans worked out and the money in hand.

But here we met with another trying obstacle. Not every one was delighted with the spread of Christianity, and we found to our chagrin that not a square foot of ground would be sold to us for a Christian building! Here was indeed a set-back! Followed weary and unsuccessful days of search for some out-of-the-way lot that might be got by over-paying, and efforts to buy thru outside agencies. And then when we were despairing and about to give up,—we were

granted another demonstration of where the Power that was really carrying forward this work had its Source. And this was the way of it:—

A middle-aged Japanese man came to our town one day, bought the most desirable corner lot in the place, and then called upon me to tell me why he had bought it. Many years before he had lived here as a boy. Later he had gone to the city of Kyoto and established a dairy. There he had come under the influence of that great Japanese Christian, Joseph Hardy Neesima, and had become a Christian himself. Almost immediately the idea had possessed him that he must build a church in the town of his boyhood. That had been fifteen years before; and during all those years he had been saving, little by little, for this one purpose. To-day he had purchased the lot where later the church should be erected!

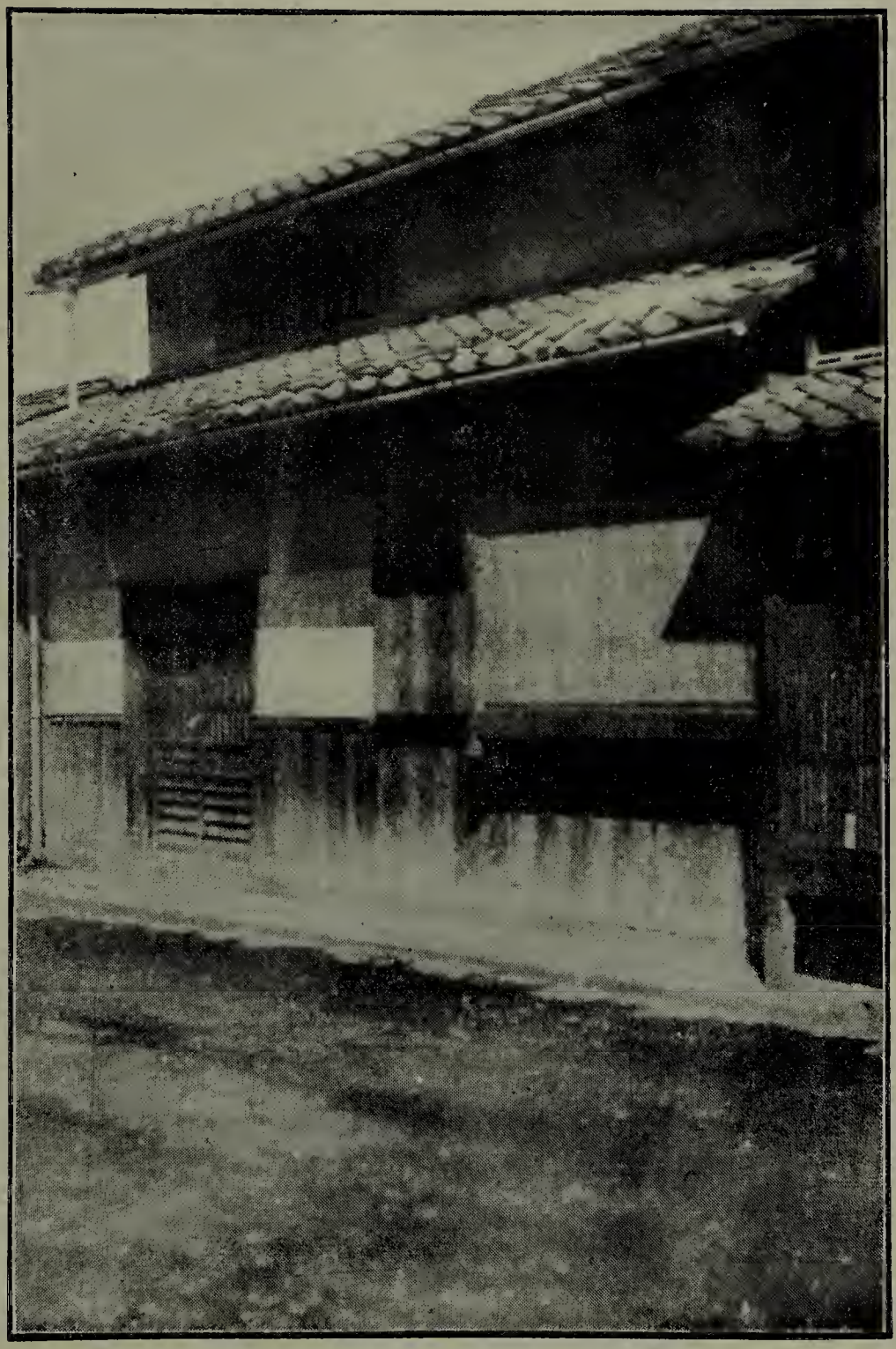
The reports of our own work here had encouraged him to believe the time was near

for that church to be realized. He had come to thank us for our efforts, and to propose mutual co-operation. And this co-operation on his part meant that half the choice location he had just secured was to be ours for our Y.M.C.A. Building!

How we had worried, and fretted, and despaired over our inability to buy some little back-street lot! And lo! for fifteen years our God had been preparing for us the best spot in the town! So we learned our second lesson.

Long before this, the beginnings of the little church our new friend was working for had been made. When we came to prepare for a church into which we might introduce our student converts, we found that already there were a few townspeople who in times past, and some of them in places remote, had accepted the Faith. And this tiny group were assembling Sunday by Sunday, in a little house belonging to one of their number, to encourage each other in their mutual

ideals. Here was a beginning; but there was no pastor, and no one qualified to act as such. So we began to hold church services, in which I acted as preacher, organist, and choir, with the co-operation of the young Japanese instructor, who was in everything the more efficient half of the team. The first Sunday there were five in the audience. But it grew rapidly. Secret believers appeared, who had awaited such an occasion to show their colors. But more especially the students began to attend. Many became so much interested in the Bible classes that they were eager for further instruction at the "church." Fortunately for me, most of the audience hadn't heard a real preacher, so that they did not know but that the hour-long Bible-lessons that I inflicted upon them were the regular thing. I was able to supplement the Bible class lessons by the "church" dissertations, so that they worked together for quicker results than either alone could have brought.



In this small house began the church.

Soon Bible class members began to be baptised. We had to send clear to Kyoto for an ordained missionary or a native pastor to come and officiate at such times.

In less than three years that humble beginning had so prospered that the little congregation, altho composed of people of little means, was able to build for itself a modern church edifice, and to raise the salary for a native pastor to shepherd the flock. And not a cent for either building, salary, or current expenses has been given them from America.

It was only natural that we should feel greatly enthusiastic over the outlook, with the large Bible classes, producing results; with a growing church; with a student Y.M.C.A. whose building was soon to rear its beacon-like walls above the squat structures of the neighborhood. We began to anticipate a speedy sweeping of the Good Tidings thruout this whole neglected province, which had never before, from the

beginning of time, had the chance to know what is offered freely, and means so much, to most civilized sections of the world to-day.

But sometime before the building of the *church*, there began another movement in our community, of a very different nature, and destined to affect us deeply.

I have already mentioned the presence of a large number of Buddhist temples in the town. Investigations showed that the train of priests connected with these were of an ignorant, indolent class, and that nothing,—beyond a routine of official ceremonies, which amounted to little, and the pompous and costly burying of the dead, which services brought in their chief revenue,—was being done by them. This comatose luxury was disturbed by the advances of the Christian movement. And when the first flush of popularity had given place to such substantial evidences of results and permanency as the organizations and their proposed buildings, these priests

The church built by the contributions of the members themselves, within three years of "first Sunday."

aroused themselves for resistance. They protested with the school authorities to stop the activities of the American teacher, and even sent direct threats to me; but without effect. Then they turned their energies to inciting the people against us.

Now there was in the student body a small group of the unruly element whose chief enjoyment seemed to be to fight or break discipline. Two big bullies, especially, were notorious for insubordination and the invention of mischief. And it was not long till these two fellows had formed an opposition party, which they very ably headed, for the sole purpose of banishing the Y.M.C.A. and Bible classes forever from the school. They had been suspended from school for past offenses toward school regulations; but here was promised a season of unique sport, which,—being directed against a movement already coming under criticism and priestly disfavor,—might escape punishment, and even win

for its perpetrators distinction in the community!

It would be a long story to relate in detail the developments of the following months. Those men were not fools, altho they had failed to pass their examinations so frequently that they were much older than most of their fellows. They had rather more than average ability, as events proved. It was merely misapplied. They led a systematic and resourceful campaign of abuse and persecution, such as, I believe, the annals of modern missions in Japan have seldom, if ever, paralleled.

In the earlier stages, when a Christian boy, or even one who merely attended a Bible class, entered the school grounds, he would be greeted with a torrent of ridicule, invective, abuse, and contumely, hurled at him from the throats of a jeering mob in the windows above the entrance. Public ridicule is a bitter blow to an Oriental; yet there were few withdrawals from the Bible

classes. Then came a series of petty persecutions, which included harassing in class-rooms during recitations and the mutilating of the books and even the examination papers of the Y.M.C.A. boys. And finally, thru a chain of increasing viciousness, force was resorted to; and the time came when a mob of the opposing students would attack a single one of our group, and leave him, after serious hazing, by the roadside at night.

Then it seemed that something must be done to stop the depredations. Once again I felt a touch of that first-day panic. It seemed a tremendously lonely situation. There was no one of mature age or experience with whom to consult. There was not even a single native Christian of years' standing to whom I could turn. And when my young men came to me for suggestion, I could only refer them—with, I fear, faint assurance—to the One remaining Source of aid.

The situation was discussed in a meeting of these inexperienced boys—only a few of whom were as yet avowedly Christians; and by them it was determined what should be attempted.

Oh, what a childish, unsophisticated, futile scheme was theirs! And how the opposition laughed with glee and derision when they learned of it! They decided that they could not use *force* consistently, and that the only thing left to try was—*prayer*. It was a simple plan: merely to start for school fifteen or twenty minutes early each morning, and to come by my study to spend the extra time in united prayer for a solution of the problem. And this, they fondly thought, would help matters!

On the first morning, about a dozen gathered in my study. It was an awkward meeting. The participants were not experienced in the routine conduct of such gatherings. Some of them had never even prayed before. Yet I shall never forget that

prayer meeting. They knelt in a circle about the room, the first young man began to pray, and others were to follow around the little group. But they couldn't somehow make it go. The most they had of an idea about it was that prayer is simply *talking to God,* regardless of who hears; laying the whole case before Him, and leaving the solution with Him,—without even explaining to Him how He ought to do things! Before they had gone half round the circle one poor stammering fellow broke down and wept; and that broke the whole group into tears; they were tremendously in earnest. So the poor little prayer meeting ended. And yet the feeling struck me that I had been highly privileged, in being present at that meeting; that I had heard real prayer; and that those prayers were heard beyond our roof-ridge. I felt that I who had lately come thither to teach, had that day *learned;* and it seemed as if there *must* be an answer, somehow, sometime.

But, alas! just as the opposing students had prophesied,—it was all in vain. That day the persecution was doubly severe. A *group* of our boys had arrived together, instead of coming into the campus singly, and that only drew extra attention to them. And then their ridiculous praying-scheme furnished an added motive for abuse.

Yet those praying students came the second morning, undaunted, and with them were four additional members. And I witnessed the gradual increase in attendance thruout that month, in spite of the continuance of the persecutions, till at the last session before the holidays the group had grown to more than forty. But I must not run ahead of my story.

Some results began to appear. Not a lessening of the abuse, but a change in the praying men themselves. Conversions were occuring in these meetings. Other prayer-circles were holding special sessions here and there. A group began to pray in the school

Charter members of the student Y.M.C.A. These are the young men who experienced the persecutions.

dormitory. Several times groups met in the fields or on the hills at odd hours. Deep stirrings of dormant spiritual natures were becoming daily occurences. And altho all this was done unobtrusively, almost secretly, the effects on the lives of the young men could not be hidden. Even their faces showed the difference; and their fortitude under the persecution could not but impress even their persecutors.

At length these men determined to learn what sort of performances were practised in the prayer-meetings that such results should be obtained; and so they sent a couple of their own group to spy upon us.

And what an astonishing discovery these men made! They crept into the back of the room, scarcely noticed behind the circle of prayers, now grown large, and the praying began. What! not a word of crying for vengeance upon their enemies! Not a murmur of pleading for cunning to overcome! Not even a request for the lightening

of their sufferings! No; the petitions were all for forgiveness and salvation for their oppressors; and for themselves such patience and Christlikeness of spirit under their persecutions, that their lives might convince their fellow-students of the Truth they professed! That was too much for the spies. They were overcome and melted to tears in that very meeting which they had come to report upon.

What they told those who sent them I know not; nor is it possible here to tell all the steps of the *denouement*, which included some personal work by individual members of the praying group. But this much must be told: Within the month each of the two leaders of the opposition came voluntarily to my study, singly and unbacked by the other; each made a full confession, and asked me if I thought there was any hope for him! And when I assured them that there was the best kind of hope, each went further into detail and told of the plans that

had not yet carried, and the secret sins of his own life. Not even their own parents suspect the things that many a boy has told me of himself in the quiet of my dingy attic room, over in that old shanty where we lived thru those first two eventful years! And when I still pointed out that the very fact of his present concern over his past sins indicated the hopefulness for another chance, and turned his plea for personal forgiveness for his injuries to us by saying that we who asked pardon from our Master for so much ourselves, could not refuse the same to a brother man,—then each of them asked to go before the whole group of our students and repeat his confession there.

So I saw the marvelous sight of these two erstwhile bullies standing before the group of young men against whom they had led the bitterest of persecutions, and with tears falling down their cheeks asking for pardon. And not personal pardon only, but asking them to continue to pray for them, that in time

they might be worthy to join their number, and to be known, also, as Christians!

So there came about the complete, voluntary surrender of the opposition, without the lifting of a finger of force; thru this same childish, unsophisticated, futile means of *prayer!*

The school and the community had to witness the miracle of the two most unprincipled rogues in the student body suddenly become models of industry, personal character, and zeal for the up-lift of their fellows! On Christmas day these two and seven others,—including some of the former opponents and some whom they had maltreated with mob violence,—were baptised side by side at the little church, in the presence of an amazed audience of fellow students and towns-people.

Never from that day to this has there been opposition on the part of the students. Whether they accept Christianity or hold aloof, they have learned to respect the

Power they then saw in operation. They had learned their lesson. And I, too, had learned. Such was my third lesson in faith and prayer.

And fortunate it was for me that I learned it then; for the time was soon to come when I should need it sorely.

* * * * * *

It was not to be expected that the Buddhist priests, who had started the opposition, would be convinced by our success. Instead, they were only the more alarmed. Their opposition took on a more formidable aspect when they brought it into the open. The leading newspaper of the province was persuaded to publish a series of articles against Christianity in general and against us in particular; and these articles were prepared with great vigor and force, if with small intelligence. Then the priests won over a number of representatives to the Provincial Assembly, and it became a political

issue whether or not the American teacher should be permitted to have personal religious convictions! Politics are not so different in the Orient from those in the Occident.

I was asked to call upon the "Commissioner of Education and Religion" at the provincial capital. He explained to me the serious opposition of influential people, whose disfavor might injure the academy, and advised me to give up the mission work temporarily, until the trouble blew over. I could not "pretend" to give it up; for I felt a matter of that kind ought to be settled, not dodged. This official asked me to call upon him again; declaring his personal sympathy with my side; saying he would use his influence in my behalf, and that he believed he could win the decision in my favor.

Not long afterward he wrote me a letter, which with elaborate explanations and circumlocutions asked a large cash loan! And this, he explained, must be done entirely on the quiet, as his position would be

endangered if it were known he had borrowed. I neither had the money to spare, nor the desire to buy my way into favor. I have preserved the whole series of letters which he wrote in his endeavor to make capital of my extremity. And altho he was emphatic in denying any intention to accept a bribe, his interest turned against me so soon as I refused the "loan." Shortly thereafter a bill was voted thru the local assembly to cut off the academy's appropriation unless it dismissed me.

Now the principal, who had not been greatly disturbed thus far by the demands and threats of the opposition, was forced to act. He laid the situation before me frankly, and urged me to abandon all Christian activities and avoid unpleasant complications.

It was explained to me that my English teaching had been entirely satisfactory (and as for that they had already increased my salary, without my request), and that the only thing needful for insuring myself a

permanent position, with any concessions I liked, was the disbanding of Bible classes and Y.M.C.A. and my personal neutrality regarding things religious! Even our nearly-completed building need not be a loss, since the authorities would buy it for school purposes!

The principal seemed surprised that I could not accept such terms; that I considered the work of character-building more important than that of imparting English idioms. And when I had made that definite, he urged me to *resign* from the school, to avoid the embarrassment of discharge. But this, also, I could not do; since I felt a principle was at stake. If I should resign, the matter would end quietly, instead of supplying a "test-case" as to whether teachers hire out their *souls*, as well as their time and energies for certain specified work. And this was not so slight a question as it might seem, since the Y.M.C.A. at Tokyo was continually being asked to nominate

American college men as English teachers for government schools in various parts of the Empire.

Therefore, the inevitable occurred, and at the end of my second year's contract, I was informed that no new contract could be made. I asked for, and received, a signed statement from the principal, which definitely stated that the cause of my dismissal was my influencing the students toward Christianity. It read :—

"*To whom it may concern :*

"*This is to certify that Mr. William Merrell Vories has been a teacher of English in the Shiga Ken Prefectural Commercial School since February, 1905, and that his instruction and discipline have been entirely satisfactory. His dismissal is due to the objections of citizens of this Ken, most of whom are Buddhists, to his teaching the Bible and influencing the students toward Christianity.*

"*Signed :* Y. I.,

"*Principal.*"

* * * * * *

Where, now, were the signs of promise; and of what avail the organizations and the numbers and the building? All that had been built up, and all the pioneering and sowing and cultivating, seemed to be dead loss. At one blow, the powers-that-be had doomed it all to extinction!

Of course, I thought of the alternative of staying there and building up the mission, apart from the teaching position. In fact, I do not believe I thought of anything else. But that, truly, was a naïve notion. For even a missionary must have food and a few clothes; and even in Japan such things cost money; while I had invested the little I had saved in that new building—now apparently not to be occupied. And even had we had funds, I was in disfavor and disgrace in the community. Popularly it was believed,—and doubtless the idea was fostered by the priests,—that I had been put out of the school because I was a dangerous character, exerting a pernicious influence upon the

The Herbert Andrews Memorial Y. M. C. A. Building—the new quarters into which we moved after two years in the old house.

students! What parents would dare allow their sons to come near me,—not to mention permitting them to live in our new Y.M.C.A. Dormitory?

With this forlorn and resourceless outlook was I expected to establish an independent mission? Wasn't that expecting too much? Surely God could not ask it. Evidence was pretty strong that my usefulness here was ended; and that I was justified in quitting the whole failure, and in going to a more comfortable field of labor. Surely there were plenty of needy places in the world!

And yet why, *why* had God led us thus far, if only to let the thing drop? It seemed unbelievable. And further, there yet encompassed us that multitudinous, mute appeal. It was not the will of these hundreds of thousands of souls, still without the bare chance to hear the Good Tidings, that their chance should be cut off at its dawning. Their need was as great as ever; and none cared for them. If we left, there was no

evidence that any Board or any individual would send to their aid! And that appeal would have been irresistible, even had it not been seconded by the voiced appeal of the students and the little community of Christians.

Had I not been a witness to the persecutions of my student friends, and seen their fortitude, their faith, their victory? And now should I—who was counted their preceptor—turn my back and run, because the persecution happened to be directed against *me?* I could not do so, for very shame; even if I had not learned the lesson of it. But it was well for me that I had learned that lesson!

I looked into the treasury, and found we still had two hundred dollars in the bank. Also I found that the final bill of the contractor for our building was just two hundred dollars. We were not in debt. We had a balance of zero to begin upon, as we moved into our new quarters to start the

upward fight in the building of the Omi Mission!

We prayed,—and we *expected,* as much as we could with so little evidence at hand; but the Homeland seemed unusually far away, and the call of kindred ties pulled harder, while it looked a little gloomy and lonesome near at hand.

And yet, those first days were among the happiest of my life. It was fortifying to feel that I hadn't sold out my principles to the authorities, and that I had beaten down the impulse to desert. And it was a joy to learn what true friends I had among the students and a few of the citizens. Their solicitude for me could not have been greater had I been a bed-ridden invalid! Love is the universal language, that needs no interpreter; the universal bond, wide as humanity, that can not be severed by political divisions or racial differences. And then the unspeakable sense of the Divine Presence, that seemed more tangible and immediate as we were

driven thither by the blasting of other resources, was more than worth the cost.

I had heard of instances such as those of George Müller's orphanages in England and Moody's Institute in America—where remarkable answers to prayer had brought needed means to carry on missions or charitable work, in crises. But it is easier to expect such results when one's work is located in the public eye; and, anyway, when one scarcely knows where the next meal is coming from, it is harder to trust than in times of abundance. Yet even in our isolation we were to see great things.

An American business man traveling in Japan, altho he did not visit our mission, heard about the situation in Omi. He arranged to send us twenty-five dollars a month, thru a friend, without his name being mentioned. For two years I did not know the source of that assistance; but I certainly did realize that it came; and that it came just when we *had* to have it!

This meant bread and butter; but there must be means for developing a whole mission plant; and not for our one town only, but for reaching out thru the teeming towns and villages all round us. Here came into play an old hobby of mine, that pointed also to a providential preparation from years before.

Away back in my high school days, when I had felt the call of the foreign field, I had sought for excuses to stay at home. Many of these I had set up, only to have them bowled over by the logic of actual conditions. Finally I had hit upon what I thought an admirable plan.

Having a strong liking for architecture and some evidence of latent ability in that direction, I determined that I would become an architect in America, make a large fortune, and then send out half a dozen missionaries. That would be so much better for the Cause; and, more particularly, it would excuse me from going out!

This excuse served me for some years, during which I continued to study architecture, as a hobby, before I came to deal quite honestly with the question and to perceive that one missionary in the hand was better than several in the bush of my imagination. When I finally set out for Japan, I lamented the lost energy spent on architecture, and wished I had employed it in acquiring something useful to the missionary.

Yet here at this crisis the purpose of all this "wasted energy" became apparent. For architecture has proved the chief source of income for our mission. And this is how: I had observed in traveling about the Empire in my vacations, while I was still teaching, that a good deal of uneconomical building had been done by various missions. And it soon became evident that some rather inconvenient buildings had cost over much, where the builders were at the mercy of native contractors. The thought came to me that I might be able to serve the other

missions while earning support for our own. And so it has proved.

Then we began the publishing of a small monthly paper, reporting the progress of the mission, for the benefit of friends in America who had helped in the erection of our first building. And so favorably has the little *Omi Mustard-Seed* been received, that not only those first friends, but several hundreds of others, have come to subscribe for it, read it, and from time to time send contributions to help us extend the work. In this way has grown up a wide circle of supporters, who not only assist in the financial side, but bear us up thru sympathetic interest and intercessory prayer.

Thus sustained, the feeble beginnings have grown into a far more efficient work than ever the original successes promised, already reaching not only the town where we make our headquarters, but a half dozen others; employing, not one man's spare time after his teaching duties, but the full time and talents of

half a dozen workers; and aiming to cover the whole long-neglected Province as rapidly as means permit. It has become evident that the seemingly fatal blow of the opposition was turned by our God into the best thing that could have happened to the work.

This fourth lesson of these years has taught us to look forward expectantly and to plan more widely for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom in Omi. And we have had many reasons for believing that the mission is to go on succeeding. Not only the remarkable working out of our quandary at the start, and the rapid growth of the work; but in several most unexpected ways. It is now little over three years since we faced the future without resources and in disgrace; but already not only the means of support is being supplied, but even the outside disfavor is mostly gone.

Last September, the same principal of the same school from which I was discharged came to me with the astounding request that

I come back to the school,—not to teach English, but to give a course of lectures on *Ethics!* And when I suggested that my teaching of ethics would have to be based upon the tabooed Christianity, he said that Christian ethics was just what was wanted, and that I might feel free to say *whatever I chose.* So I had the peculiar pleasure of standing again in the familiar class-rooms and proclaiming the same principles for which I had only three years before been driven out because I taught them even privately in my own house! I believe I even made the presentation a little more strenuous, since the young men could not escape, being there under the principal's orders!

That was a far greater change in attitude toward us than we could have expected; but an even greater was to be experienced. When we opened the second permanent branch of our mission, in a town some miles southwest, the modest building we had rented to house the work was not large enough

for the public opening services, and the people of the town,—those people who had three years previous been so determined to stamp out our dangerous influence!—gave us, rent-free, their town auditorium in which to hold the meetings. Then for two successive nights eight hundred and fifty of them crowded into the services, while crowds more thronged the open windows; and these all listened with absorbed interest and liberal applause, for three hours and a half, to a program chiefly composed of three, hour-long Christian sermons!

But more,—among the congratulatory speeches made on this occasion was one by the lieutenant-governor, acting as personal representative of the governor, himself. We could hardly persuade ourselves that three years ago this local government had voted to shut off the appropriations of their own school, if it did not throttle the very influence which now the community was being congratulated upon having in its midst!

In the same meetings the mayor also delivered a commendatory speech. No one hearing him could have dreamed that he was none other than the editor and proprietor of that same old "yellow journal" which three years previously had published the libels against us, which had contributed to our attempted overthrow! And it was his paper that published afterward full reports of our meetings, even to the *sermons!* Truly our God can cause even "the wrath of men to praise Him."

Sitting in those most stirring gatherings and running rapidly over the years past, who could have regretted any of the darker hours, or have counted them hardships; who could have failed to be inspired with confidence and a deepening purpose; and who could have escaped the fancy—and not have thanked God that it was only a fancy—"What if I had deserted! What if I had run away!"

* * * * * *

But the vindication of one's principles and the favor of those in high places would be of small account to such a work as ours, without its having an effective hold upon the rising generation of young men, among whom we especially seek to labor. And so I turn most gladly of all to speak of the way the mission appeals to them.

I might recount the stories of dozens of the students, of young business men and clerks, and of the railroad employees (among whom we have special work), in various parts of our province; the numbers of those who gather every week in a half dozen voluntary *Bible classes;* the courage of many who suffer hardships as good soldiers of Christ; or the centers of uplift and spiritual power that many of our men are maintaining in the homes or offices or shops to which they have gone. But this account must be confined to but one illustrative example. I want to tell you in outline the story of one of our students.

Hachiman Yama (mountain) from our study window.

One of the two who helped to make habitable our attic in the old house so that they might come to live with us, was at that time a second-year boy in the academy. He had shown much interest in the Bible class to which he belonged; but when the first converts were won from among its members, he came to me with an odd confession. It was in substance this: "I enjoy our Bible class very much, and am glad these boys have become Christians; but I want to tell you about myself, so you will not be disappointed in my case. I can never become a Christian (!), and if one *must* become a Christian if he continues to attend the class, then I must stop; altho I don't want to."

"Well," I replied, "I don't believe you have gotten a very clear idea of Christianity yet, or you wouldn't suppose there was any compulsion about it. But why can't you ever become one?" Then he explained that his family were Buddhists, he the eldest son, his father dead, and that he would have to

inherit the family faith along with the family property! I told him that no one could inherit Christianity, or be brow-beaten into it, or in any way acquire it, aside from personal conviction and volition. And I assured him that he might continue to attend the class and that, if he so desired, I should not ever *ask* him to accept Christianity. However, I added that if he ever came to appreciate the meaning of Christ's life to the world, and His possible meaning to himself, no power outside himself could prevent his accepting Him. This did not frighten him and he continued to attend the Bible class, the "Family" worship of our little household, and occasionally the "church." I kept my promise not to urge him toward Christianity. But within a half year he came into my room one night, in profound emotion; spent the entire night there; and before morning had voluntarily announced his intention of following the Christ whithersoever He should lead him, regardless of family opposition or

loss of inheritance, or whatever the cost might be!

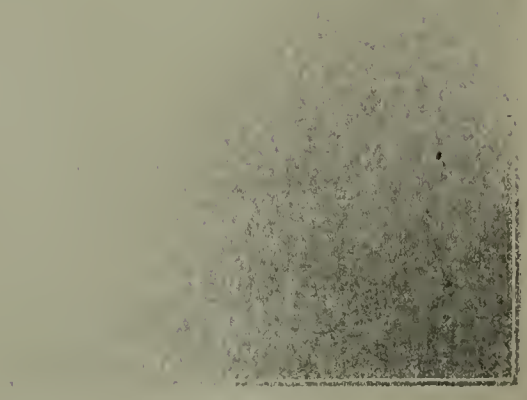
He was thus in time to experience the season of persecutions of which I have already spoken; and no other Christian boy of them all was subjected to severer hardships than he. Yet he persisted and only increased in zeal and purpose, and still believed so thoroughly in the work for his fellow students that, when I was dismissed from the school, just as he was graduated, he volunteered to give a year of his time to help us establish the mission. During that year of crisis and privations, he performed all sorts of service, from clerical to menial, for which he not only would accept no salary, but would not even be a burden to me for his living expenses, securing an allowance from his family for that purpose.

Then when we were tided over the crisis, he went, at his family's urgent request, to take a business position in his native city.

Because of his ability (he had graduated at the head of the school), and because of the zeal with which he undertook any task, and because he had a character to win the confidence of his employers,—he was advanced far beyond others of greater years and experience. He became a marked man, refusing flattering offers from various sources, to stick to the course that he had entered upon. Finally toward the end of last year he was informed that the next year he was to be in line for the managership of a new branch of the corporation. That meant a great increase of salary, social position, influence and luxury, with possibilities of partnership in the concern, and all that a young business man might picture of success.

On the eve of this great good fortune, he came into a sudden experience of which he afterward told me in detail. Wakening in the night, he began thinking over this new opportunity and its relation to his whole life. As he thought out the causes that had led

Hachiman Yama (mountain) from the bay of Lake Biwa.



up to his success, he traced everything back to the day he stood out for the conviction of his new-found faith in the Christ, and he saw that his Master had made him what he was. Then there came the vision of the students back in the old school, and the young men of all that province of Omi, where the school stood; and he thought of what the same Master might mean to all of them,—if they but knew; if there were messengers to tell them! And they were being told, too, to some extent, and increasingly. But it was a *foreigner* who was devoting his life to telling them. While *he*, who knew so well what the Good Tidings might mean to a young Japanese, was preparing to put his life into—winning personal success!

He was no make-believe Christian, and this reasoning was enough. After a night of prayer, he wrote me the next morning that if he was needed in the Omi Mission, he would resign all and come back to the work.

Was he *needed?*—Oh, how badly we need men, by dozens and scores, to man this wide, populous, unevangelized valley! And him, of all others, for his talents and consecration, for his familiarity with the whole situation and his experience in its work, we needed. But we were, as usual, running beyond our income, with our force as we stood; how could we add another so high-priced man? I could not write him a refusal, so I answered that I should come to his city and talk it over with him.

I tried to explain to him, when we met, but he was too eager to talk about the work, and his joy in having determined upon the sacrifice for it.

The salary? Oh, I had not understood him. He could get a *salary* where he was, if that were what he was looking for. No; he wanted to *give his life* to his Master's service!

Living expenses? Had I forgotten the small estate that was to have been inherited

with the family faith? In a few months it would be his, but *without* the faith-appendage. That was a small amount, but enough for his needs; in fact, there would probably be some surplus to contribute to the mission!

Thus Yoshida came back to the work. Is it strange that results are already appearing in increasing measure? Is it strange that we expect the Mission to go forward in its task of offering uncared-for Omi the chance which it had never had to take its own place in the Kingdom of our Christ? Is it strange that during my recent American tour the people responded to our appeal for funds to equip our various branches with buildings? Is it strange that we can thank God for the privilege of having a part in such a work, even tho it should mean "fellowship in His sufferings"?

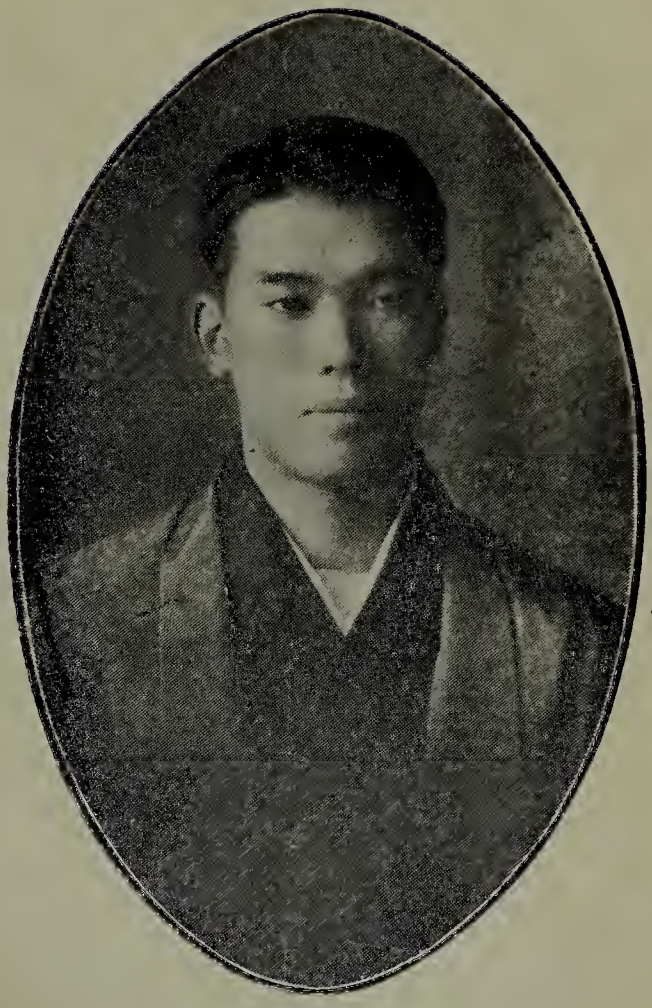
Thus the hobby and the far-away dreams of one, the life-purpose of another, and the prayers of a third were shaped together, despite the separation of years in time and

continents in space, by the Lord of the Harvest, to work out His plans for a remote and uncared-for portion of His vineyard.

It would be too long a story should I go on to tell of the remarkable coming of means from time to time, in the years since, for further equipment and advance; and of the different men who have been raised up, strangely prepared for the work and led into it, from sources the most unexpected, at each crisis of need for more laborers. Such instances but repeat the providences that have shaped the work from the first.

So was planted a little *Mustard-Seed* in far-off Omi. In its planting was the hand of God; and "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

* * * * * *



E. V. Yoshida, whose story is briefly outlined here.

On board S.S. "Kamakura Maru," bound for Japan; Pacific Ocean, about Lat. 41° N; *Long.* 145° E.—*Nov.* 20, 1910.—*

Just now the cabin boy handed me a *wireless* that has come out to meet me:—"*Buji kaeri matte—Miyamoto.*" (I am awaiting your safe return—Miyamoto.)

What a coincidence! While I was nearing Japan the *first* time, it was Miyamoto who was praying for the coming of the then unknown teacher. Now he is again praying me across the stormy waters as I return, and this time each of us knows of the other's sympathy and purposes, and he sends out this message of welcome to remind me of the contrast, and the similarity, of the two approaches to Japan.—*Then*, it was alone, a stranger, facing the unknown. *Now*, it is coming back to an established work; to friends and fellow-laborers who are of the fruits of the work, and whose love and

* The above narrative was written out on shipboard while returning from the building-fund trip to America.

co-operation are the source of inspiration and hope; to bright prospects for the future development of the mission; and accompanied by new recruits to share in the forward campaign!

And this coming back should mark the beginning of a new epoch for the work. Here ends the backward look that is taken for the benefit of our friends, and we can thank the all-loving Father for all the providences it reveals. Now must begin a forward movement that shall make new records for the growing Kingdom of our Christ in Omi. *"Let us advance,—but on our knees!"*

AFTERWORD.

This story is not fiction, but the simple telling of an actual experience of God's providence in the founding of a unique mission.

It is told in printed form at this time for a purpose. The Omi Mission has reached another crisis. We need *your* help for a particular object.

Upon my return after the recent ten-months' journey in quest of funds for needed buildings, I find the long-planned work for farmers and other villagers advanced to such a stage that it demands special attention. We must have additional evangelists for the purpose; and that means both men and money.

If the reader is familiar with missions in Japan, he will realize the importance of this present opportunity. Up to the present, mission work has been confined to the cities

and educational centers. Eighty per cent of the population of Japan is *villagers*, and is unreached by the Gospel. Many declare work among this class is impossible, because of the grip of the rural Buddhist priests on the ignorant people. Our Omi population is chiefly of this class. When, therefore, a promising beginning has been made, converts baptised, and several villages are actually *asking* for workers to be sent to them, it is cause for more than ordinary congratulation. We have believed for years that these people will respond to the Christian message, personally presented; and the present village awakening in Omi, is demonstrating their approachability. If we can carry forward this movement at this strategic time, it should set an example that will give the rural populations of many other provinces also the chance for which they have waited over half a century, while the cities alone were being manned by missionaries.

The time is ripe. The opportunity is

unique. For not alone our mission, but for all rural Japan, it is a crisis.

Let me refer to the written endorsement of the late Dr. J. D. Davis (for 35 years a missionary in the neighboring field of Kyoto), whom Dr. John R. Mott called "one of the greatest missionary statesmen in the world." This was written in November, 1908.

"The impression seems to have been gained in certain circles in western lands that Japan is nearly evangelized and that the work might now be left almost entirely to the Japanese themselves.

"Japan is only touched in spots, as it were. There are three provinces without a missionary in them, and there are five provinces with an aggregate population of nearly four millions, which have only two missionaries each. Thirteen provinces, with an aggregate population of less than eighteen millions, have about four-fifths of the missionaries in them; and thirty-three provinces with over thirty-one millions of people, have only about

one-fifth of the missionaries at work among them. Seventy-five or eighty per cent of the Protestant Christians are found in the same limited area where most of the missionaries are laboring.

"Thus there are large sections of the country which are unmanned and untouched. Take this rich province of Omi, lying about Lake Biwa. More than twelve hundred towns and villages are found marked on the map of the province. Most of its 800,000 inhabitants are living in small towns and farming villages and hamlets.

"There is no more inviting or promising field in Japan than this Omi field, and if Mr. Vories could have assistants of like faith and zeal, and the money to put eight or ten Japanese workers out among the schools, towns and villages, this province might be evangelized in the near future. The writer came to Kyoto thirty-three years ago, and in the midst of his duties as a teacher in the Doshisha school, and work in the city of

Kyoto and vicinity, he has only been able to go into the edge of this province of Omi. He has been longing and praying these thirty years to see this rich province evangelized. It seems as if God has sent Mr. Vories there to use him in the accomplishment of this work. I sincerely hope he may receive the money and encouragement needed to realize this great purpose to which he is giving his life."

If you have found in the reading of this little narrative any evidence that this work is of God, and if you feel that it would be His will that it should push out into the wider field that just now is calling to it, will you not make some effort to help it on?

A little monthly paper, called *The Omi Mustard-Seed*, is issued by the mission at a subscription price of fifty cents per year. This will keep in touch with the later developments of the work any one who has been attracted to it by the present story.

Will you not aid the *Omi Mission* by subscribing for its little paper, or by a contribution to its funds for rural evangelization; and will you not pass on this story to some one else who may become interested?

Full information can be had by writing direct to Wm. Merrell Vories, Hachiman, Omi, Japan.

The outline map of the province of Omi shows our field. Places marked with a cross are those in which we have been working. These are all on the east side of the Lake, and reached by railway. We must also push into the west side across the Lake.

The size of our field may be judged by these figures:—

Lake Biwa is over 40 miles long.

Omi contains nearly 800,000 people in about 1,400 towns and villages.

Ours is the only mission here.

MAIN ISLAND
OF JAPAN
SHOWING OMI
OMI
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W
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SHIOZU
IMAZU
WARASONO
NAGAHAMA
LAKE
BIWA
OGAWA
KATSUNO
MAIBARA
HIKONE
FARM
HACHIMAN
KATADA
NODA
OTSU
HARA
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PROPORTION.

(The people of the United States in 1907 spent $60,000,000.00 for lace; they gave, all denominations included, less than $7,000,000.00 for Missions.)

ELEVEN cents for Missions and a dollar-bill of lace
Is our index of proportion; shows our zeal to save the Race.

Said the Lord to His disciples: "Bring an offering to-day
For the famine-stricken peoples who are suffering far away."
And His sleek, well-fed disciples, looking up into His face,
Made reply: "We'd like to do it, but we've spent so much for lace."
Said the Lord: "Seek first my Kingdom to establish among men;
Teach the dead in sin and evil they can rise thru me again."
So they gave their extra coppers and they sent a man of grace
To conduct a penny mission,—but the dollars went for lace.

Said the Lord: "A tiny army mighty things for God hath done;
But He calls for ten-fold measures that the millions may be won."
But they answered: "Lord, have patience; We can't hope to win the Race;
Leave some work for our descendants; leave us something for our lace!"
Said the Lord at last, in sorrow: "Sleep ye on, O faithless race;
Take your ease among your rose-paths, with your blood-bought bolts of lace!"
But His people made remonstrance: "Lord, take not with us offence:
We have not forgot Thy Kingdom,—lo, we give eleven cents!"

Thus eleven cents for Missions and a dollar-bill for lace
Is our index of proportion; shows our zeal to save the Race!

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A mustard-seed in Japan : embodying the
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